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ARTISTIC LICENSES.

It is an often asked question, how far it is admissible for an artist to depart from the strict following of Nature, in his representations of her? What degree of license may be permitted in painting? for sculpture, we believe, admits little, if any. A general answer to the question may be given by saying, that everything depends on the motive with which the license is taken. If it be to obtain the fuller and clearer statement of a truth, we can admit any degree of *apparent* falsehood; but, if it be to make a false thing seem true, or to obtain some merely technical quality which glorifies only the artist's self, not one line of license is worthy or should be admitted.

This worthy license is various in its kind, and in fact embraces all the means we take to compensate for the imperfection of our materials. Thus, in the instance Ruskin gives of Titian's wood-cut, in which, to represent the light of the sun, he surrounds it with black lines representing rays, the license is noble, because it is taken to convey more briefly and forcibly a positive truth; and, though the eye might not take cognizance of that truth, so conveyed, the mind receives it unquestioningly and is satisfied with it. The works of great artists are often full of such instances—because, seeking to convey a truth to the mind of the spectator, and caring little for the means by which it shall be conveyed, they take those which are nearest at hand and most expressive. Thus when Turner, in a landscape, with the sun in the middle of the picture, gives you a tower, with its near side in full sight, it is absolutely a falsehood, because, under no possible circumstances could that side have been in anything else than full shadow, yet the effect of the picture is thereby made more brilliant, and a degree of brilliancy is given to the whole which tells the great truth of the light of Nature more perfectly than if he had adhered to the minor facts strictly. The license in this case, we should say, was justifiable, though whether it is pleasant or not, depends on the individual disposition of the observer. If, like Turner, he loves light more than anything else, he will be satisfied with the result—but, if the truth of the particular is of

more importance to him, as is the case with most people, the picture will be offensive.

So in Vernet's picture—The Brethren of Joseph, exhibited here some time since—the figures were arranged with reference to one point of distance, and the landscape drawn to another. The reason of it was, that the landscape was of itself of great importance, being a view of the place where tradition says that the occurrence actually took place; and it was, therefore, of great importance that the features of the scene should be presented clearly; and to do this, the horizon must be elevated above the heads of the figures. But to draw the figures from the same point, would destroy the dignity of the group; and the artist wisely preferred telling a falsehood which could deceive nobody, and which, being intended to deceive nobody, was not, in fact, a falsehood, to omitting an important truth, or injuring the dignity (which is also a truth) of his picture.

In Turner's Keswick Lake, there is a strong shadow in the foreground falling across the picture to the left, indicating that the sun is at the right, while a rainbow appears on the right side, near where the sun ought to be. This is, of course, a bold and positive falsehood, but it deceives no one; for everybody who knows anything of Nature, will have learned that a rainbow is always opposite the sun—and, though Turner knew this well, he wanted the rainbow to make out his color, and wanted, also, a shadow falling that way to make out his light and shade, and keep the picture in balance—and so he gave us both, each exquisitely true, yet inconsistent with each other. The expedient blinds nobody to the truth, and produces a result full of beauty, and is, therefore, from his point of view, justifiable. Another artist, whose name we have forgotten, painted a rainbow, but instead of making it circular, drew it elliptical, and when one of his friends pointed out his error, he defended himself by saying that it was in perspective. This was the license of ignorance, representing falsehood for truth; and the difference between it and the use of the rainbow by Turner, needs no demonstration by us.

So where an artist exaggerates his color

for the sake of producing greater glow and effect of light, he tells a local falsehood, but enforces a general truth. He sacrifices the actual tint of the object painted, which is an accident, and might, in many cases, just as well be anything else for aught we know, but he attains the higher qualities of color, brilliancy and life, and the whole impression is more entirely that of Nature than it would have been, had the actual tint of the objects been preserved. If, for instance, we should attempt to paint a grassy sward under full sunlight, we might succeed in representing the actual tint of the grass; but the glow and intensity of the sunlight we cannot only not realize, but cannot even suggest if we adhere rigidly to the tint, and so the artist does more nobly who leaves the latter and aims at the glow—the essential quality of the all-pervading, glorious light.

There is another kind of license which we cannot look at so kindly, though it is possible, that to a higher intelligence than ours, it may be just and admissible, viz., that which, not having to do with *appearances* of things, but with the real nature of them, falsifies this nature. Michael Angelo is said to put muscles where none exist, to give a greater impression of power, and we know well that the head of the Apollo Belvidere is placed several inches from its correct position for the sake of dignity, but this power and dignity are given in humanity without the falsehood, and as our materials are sufficient to give form perfectly, without any such necessity of compensation as exists in color, and light and shade, there seems no valid reason why Michael Angelo should not always have adhered to anatomical truth, as we know he did in many of his finest works. Such license, instead of being a proof of strength, is a confession of our inability to do what Nature does with the same materials.

There remains to be spoken of a license wholly reprehensible—that which neglects to give specific truth where it is consistent with the broader qualities, as for instance, in artists who paint rocks, but neglect all indication of their kind, and trees, without caring whether they keep the marks of the species; who draw mountains, without the slightest thought whether the geologic truth be conveyed or not. This is the

license of laziness—having no compensating result, and originating always in the vanity or weakness of the artist. Let us have none of it.

THE WILDERNESS AND ITS WATERS.*

CHAP. VI.

A HEAVY DRAUGHT.

OUR next day's journey varied little from the last. Leaving our camp at sunrise of one of the most glorious days that ever dawned on field or forest, we journeyed down the river, now more rapid and wider, though less solemn than before. We rowed until noon, neglecting all the minor fishing places, such as the mouths of the cold brooks and slight rapids, hastening on to a rapid which the guides spoke of as the *ne plus ultra* of trouting. We found it to be a rocky passage of the river, not so swift that a boat might not be rowed through, against the stream, and with immense boulders of granite here and there in the water. Moodie stopped our boat at one of these, and I got out, leaving the boat for Student, having learned by experience that it is useless for two to fish from one boat. Scarcely had I stepped on the rock when Angler struck a large trout, and before he was secured, Student, on the other side, struck another, still larger. Angler landing his, at the next cast struck two, both large; and, in the meanwhile, I, pacing on my six feet platform impatiently, and casting my greatest length of line with the greatest care, had not had a raise. Again and again I offered the lure in the most winning way possible to me, but without effect, and gave it up. Angler rowed up to look at my flies, and took off the middle fly, observing that there were too many for that water. This succeeded, and now I struck one, which satisfied my ambition. I reeled him in to within managing distance, and could then see his motions, although he kept several feet beneath the surface. I kept the slightest tension on the line—enough to keep him from running off so far as to get a direct pull, and when he stopped pulling I commenced, so that he had no rest or opportunity to recruit his strength. He was very dignified, considering the circumstances, and attempted no flurry or rush, but sullenly sailed round and round the rock, with an occasional quiet attempt to get away from the scene of his vexations. When he had gone as far one way as I cared to have him go, a slight pull turned his head, and he traversed in the other direction; but while watching him, a new danger presented itself in the shape of another trout, of equal size with the first, which, attracted perhaps by the movements of his fellow, and catching a sight of the upper fly, which waved back and forwards under water, made a determined rush after it. The new activity his presence gave to the one already hooked, made the motions of the fly so irregular, that at first he could not catch it, and I called to Angler, giving a statement of the condition of my affairs. He rowed up, and made a cast over my prey in hopes to lure

the second one away, fearful that two so strong fish pulling at once might break the line, and so I should lose all; but the trout had got his appetite fixed on my fly, and finally succeeded in catching it, when, with a start, to which I prudently made no resistance, he ran off nearly a dozen feet of line, then slackening, I most cautiously reeled him up within sight. The first fish was about exhausted by this time, and his more energetic companion led him an unwilling chase, while I, rightly judging that they would exhaust each other, made no further effort than to keep them from running to some snags near by.

It might have been half an hour from the time when the first one was struck to that when the second gave up, and permitted himself to be drawn up to the rock, when grasping him cautiously in the gills, I disengaged him, and thrust him into the capacious side pocket of my coat, lest he should work off into the water while I was securing the other. That accomplished, I laid them out on the rock together. The largest measured $17\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length, and the other was shorter by less than half an inch. I was trembling from head to foot with excitement, and for some minutes could scarcely cast my fly, so I laid down on the rock in the sun to rest, and moralize on the greatness of humanity, and particularly the specimen of it under my immediate observation, who could give a half hour of his measured life to the entangling two silly fish, and bend his energies to this object with such earnestness that he must lie down as much exhausted as though he had been laboring to save life, instead of destroying it. There was no kind of use in moralizing now, however. I had come out to fish, and for the moment it was all I could do, and at it I went again, leaving the nut of the morale of the thing to be cracked at some more convenient season.

Angler, in the meanwhile, had been levying heavy contributions on the tribe of trouts, and Student doing a good business, so that when at the end of about two hours' fishing, the boats drew up to my rock to put the fish together, and get ready to move on, we had caught between twenty and thirty trout, of which six were above 17 inches in length, and all of which were above 12 inches. They were of the same gorgeous variety as that which Angler had caught in the creek the day before, and a more magnificent display of piscine beauty I do not believe any man ever saw. We stowed them carefully away in the bow of our boat, and proceeded.

We landed at the first convenient place and cooked a dinner hastily, and having eaten it with American speed, committed ourselves to the guidance of the river again. The orchard-like appearance of the banks still continued, and it was entirely impossible here to realize that it was a wilderness, as it required a continual exercise of reason to assure us that the maples were not apple-trees, and the openness of the "meadows" the result of cultivation. The guides wished us to fish at one particular place on the river before camping, and we hurried on. It was where, at a little wider place than usual, a cold brook emptied into the river, and here the trout lay in large quantities. They were small, ranging between half a pound and a pound, rarely larger, but they rose with an alacrity which

was perfectly astonishing, often leaping out of the water, and catching the fly before it touched, and with three flies on the whip, we were nearly sure of two fish rising at a cast, and often caught three. They were slender in shape, and silvery in color, apparently a different variety of the same species as the large fish we had caught at the rapids, the smallest of which were heavier than the heaviest of these, and far richer in color. The fishing was a decided rarity after the ponderous work of the morning, and Angler, particularly, enjoyed it very much. The little fellows were landed without much trouble, and after catching half a dozen I gave up, and lay down on the bottom of the boat, the others fishing for half an hour or more. In fact, my conscience was a little sensitive as to this needless waste of life, and to stop it, I at length insisted on moving on, as the sun was sinking, and we must find a camp before dark.

We were approaching a more mountainous region, and over the tree-tops could see occasionally some grand hill forms, "purple blue with the distance, and vast;" and, as it drew toward the sunset moment, we became aware that we were entering a broad basin, the river becoming shallow and wide, and the shores low and retreating to distant highlands. We passed through fields of river grasses mottled with white pond-lilies, from which, far ahead of us, sprang up flocks of ducks, which whizzed off toward far-off waters. A plover passed by, and Angler, who happened to have the fowling-piece, brought him down for supper. The ducks it was impossible to get a shot at, and we concluded it would be too much trouble to cook them if we could get them. The river, at length, expanded into a broad lake, into which we entered just as the sky began to grow gorgeous with the deepening yellow of twilight, and flecked with brilliant golden cirri. We entered a field of bulrushes which rose several feet above our heads, and which, as we pushed our way through, met wavily behind us, and shut out the view in every direction, except over head. They bent over, sometimes, until their tips touched the water again, and I presume many of them measured eight or ten feet in length. We could, now and then, hear the rushing wings of ducks, near by, but could see nothing of them, as they rose. As we emerged, at length, from the veil, the sky had deepened into a melancholy orange, and the distant mountain cut darkly against it in purple shadow, in which no objects could be distinguished. The water-fowl, started up by our sudden appearance, flew in every direction, and their long files, with rapid wing, were marked darkly against the luminous sky until they sank to the shelter of the rushes again, or were lost in the space. I felt, indeed,

"Vainly the fowler's eye,
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong;
As, darkly limed upon the distant sky,
Thy figure floats along."

Below this "pond," the guides said, we should find a log cabin, built the winter before by the lumbermen who had worked up the river so far, and would, the next winter, go over much of the ground we had traversed. We could see nothing of

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